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TO: Department of State 755.11/1-2450

FROM: BRUSSELS 68, January 24, 1950

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EUR INDEX

SUBJECT: CONTINUATION OF SPAAK'S JOURNALISTIC ATTACK ON LEOPOLD III

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The Socialist newspaper Le Peuple for January 20 (appearing in Brussels on January 19) carries an additional article by former Prime Minister Paul Henri SPAAK against Leopold III. The present polemic, under the headlines THE PERSONAL POLICY OF THE KING, is sub-titled THE KING DOES NOT RESPECT THE INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENTS OF BELGIUM.

Mr. Spaak's thesis is based on the following statement which he said was made by the King at Belgian General Headquarters on May 18, 1940 to certain of his Ministers:

> "Entered upon the war because it had been invaded and to defend itself, Belgium had undertaken no other engagement vis-a-vis its guarantors than that of defending the national territory. So long as the struggle was possible, the Belgian Army conformed to the orders of the Generalissimo, but it could not risk a rout."

The then Foreign Minister of Belgium contends that the King, by this statement, and by subsequent published declarations, sought to maintain the thesis that Belgium had given but a limited engagement to its Allies, England and France; namely to defend itself if attacked but then in the event of failure to find itself free to resume its former role of strict neutrality. Mr. Spaak in fact charges the King with falsehood by saying:

> "When the King says 'Belgium had undertaken no other engagement vis-a-vis its guarantors than that of defending the national territory', I regret to be forced to say that that is not so. Belgium had also undertaken the engagement without reserve to prevent the use of our territory as a base of operations against our guarantors."

RMcClintock:vlh 1/19/50
File 361.1

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Mr. Spaak then remarks the fact that the King, on June 2, 1940, in a circular note to Belgian diplomats, had stated:

> "Belgium has held to its international obligations, first in scrupulously maintaining its neutrality and afterwards in defending step by step the entire expanse of its territory attacked by the enemy forces."

The former Prime Minister then quotes a note from the Chef de Cabinet of the King, M. Frédéricq, to the Belgian Ambassador to France, M. Le Tellier, dated August 30, 1940, which states that:

> "Belgium, independent and neutral, has not contracted any alliances. It has undertaken vis-a-vis its guarantors the sole engagement to defend its territory against the invader. Its word has not been given beyond that point. Faithful to this word, the country has fulfilled its obligations to the extreme limit of its force. It has accomplished all its duties vis-a-vis its guarantors."

In refutation of this statement, Mr. Spaak declares that Belgium had promised that it would prevent the use of its territory either as a means of passage or as a base of operations against its allies. In consequence, Belgium did not have the right, either from the juridical or from the moral point of view, to consider that its occupation relieved it of this responsibility. Mr. Spaak's article ends on the scornful note that:

> "The King condemns himself in declaring that the war was finished for us and that we should again become neutral. Neutral between Germany, which had attacked us, and the Franco-British, who had defended us; neutral, after having been invaded in despite of law, neutral, now that we had been occupied. No, that is not what Belgium wanted!"

Robert McClintock
First Secretary of Embassy